head and at the foot of their rustic bed they hang their possessions, such as their bags, nets, etc., and some of their weapons. They sometimes stick four forked sticks into the ground, to a height of about a hand breadth above the surface, at the four corners of the bed, place two poles crosswise upon them and upon these, lengthwise, the necessary number of slats to make a sort of bedspring on which to spread skins and blankets. This type of bed is used particularly in the summer time in order to be cooler and to be free of insects and poisonous reptiles. The whites also customarily do the same thing, but they elevate their beds to a height of one or two meters above the ground to escape from tigers [jaguars--Translator]. I have slept on all of these types of beds and give my assurance that it is all a matter of habit -- nevertheless one can sleep much more comfortably on the ground. When the Indians break camp they burn all their huts.

In Mataco, "hut" or "house" is said in two ways: "hauet" and "hepp" ("h" as in the German "haus" or "c" in "Florence"). Now "hepp" also means "smoke," "steam," "mist" and a kind of plant which looks like mist at a distance; "hepp" is also the name of steamship. And now, begging the reader's indulgence, is not the analogy perfect between this Mataco idiom and ours: calling the family or house "home" and a steamship "steam"? This is one more mental approximation between the Mataco man and the Aryan man.

The spear is stood upright at the entrance to the house, and to one side are the bow and arrows, which lend a certain warlike appearance which [178] is pleasing. The houses are not constructed symmetrically, but nevertheless an attempt is made to leave, between each row of huts, a wide street-like space.

It is a pleasure to see their fires when they are cooking. On the very top are earthenware pots which contain various roots and wild fruits, which usually need several changes of water. Among these there is a type of bean which is both good and palatable, and a root which is between a sweet potato and an Irish potato. The pots are made and fire-hardened by the Indian women, who work them with care.

When the time for eating arrives, which, in the camp, is usually at eleven A.M. and at nightfall, fish on spits are brought out and crackle and hiss and smoke and drip in a way to make one's mouth water. On occasion a piece of meat from some animal will grace the

table, or a guinea pig, which are excellent tidbits, though the lack of salt makes culinary success doubtful for one who has been used to it from the very baptismal font.

The Indians like a white person to be free and easy with them and to appreciate their things. So it was that I, when I was in their camps, after having gained their confidence, would go about here and there tasting their food, and they would be beside themselves with laughter while I repeated "hiss," "hiss," which means "good," "good." Of course one must eat with the fork which nature has supplied, with the exception of soup which is drunk with the shell of a clam which is very abundant in the surrounding lakes. Where I did almost jeopardize my reputation was once when I had to drink from a vile gourd with a really filthy lip. But I closed my eyes and a few moments later opened them covered with glory, and triumphant.

On that occasion, upon taking our leave, the Indians indicated that they wished to see us fire our rifles and we, to please them, fired two or three times into the air. It was something to hear the yelling of those women, and to see the tumult of boys struggling to pick up the shells. How similar is man in all stages of civilization and age.

I was forgetting to say that the width of the huts is hardly ever greater than the length of a bed.

Chapter IV

The Indian Women

Let us now for a while take up the matter of the Indian women. The Mataco women are generally rather short, but this does not keep them from being, on occasion, quite charming and well formed while they are young [179]. While living among them it is not unusual to see them naked, but in the presence of strangers they never lack a more or less protective fig leaf. On board our ship we had, for a good many days, a man and his wife. The latter wore a pair of shorts such as those we wear when we go bathing, and as she was young and well built and good looking, I can give assurance that the situation was of somewhat questionable benefit to some of our argonauts, forced anchorites as they were.

It is worth noting that although they are such tipplers, they do 264 ●
not drink anything with their meals, not even water. On board ship the Indian guests we entertained refused all beverages while they were eating. After they had finished eating they preferred to drink water by crouching beside the river and drinking out of one hand.

The Indians are great beggars and yet miserly with their own [209]
possessions where whites are concerned. This is understandable since they are poor.

It occurs to me that I should mention something which, though 142
out of place here, I must set down for fear of forgetting it later: 145

The Indian boys, until they are eight or ten have disproportionately large bellies, so much so that they customarily bind them at the level of the navel. Later on they lose their bloated tummies and grow into well proportioned men.

It seems pertinent to me to say that the algarrobo belongs to 137
our family of the garrobas (Ceratonia silicua) and the botanists know it under the name of Prosopis algarrobo. Its importance is immense in the domestic economy of the savages and country people. It deserves close attention for this reason. The crown grows to some ten meters in diameter but is not very dense, either because of the small number of leaves or because of their shape, yet it affords quite a fair amount of shade. The bark is very rough and is similar to that of the grape vine.

The vinal (Prosopis ruscifolia) is a very small tree, yet boasts a sizeable crown. It is remarkable for its thorns which are from ten to fifteen centimeters long and sometimes a centimeter thick, and very dangerous if one gets a jab from them. The leaves, which are about the same size as acacia leaves but more pointed and somewhat rough, are said to be an effective remedy for eye ailments.

The scientific name for the chañar is Gurliöea decorticans; and of the mistol, Ziziphus mistol.

The fruit of all these trees are avidly devoured by all manner of beasts, and the algarrobo and vinal pods are the best possible fattening fodder for horses and cattle [191].

A type of fruit which is also to be found in a wild state, but in very limited quantity in my experience , is the plum. This fruit has a pleasant taste and is all the more appreciated for its scarcity.

Even had this difficulty not existed, the social organization 231
of the American nomads made the keeping of domesticated ani-
mals well nigh impossible. In [220] effect, and in spite of the
fact that one nation might occupy an immense area, yet it would
be divided into small tribes who owned sway over relatively small
territories and were (as their survivors still are) continually at war
amongst themselves. It follows from this that there was no
security, which is an indispensable condition for the raising of
animals and for any other peaceful occupation. Even at the
present time the Chaco Indians, although they are acquainted
with our domestic animals and do on occasion try to raise them,
do not do so on a worthwhile scale because the mere fact of their
possessing them is a temptation for their neighbors to invade and
despoil them. If social life had somehow got to the point of com-
pelling these Indians to gather into large groupings, then, given
the range of their vast territories and despite their being nomadic
and continually at war, it would always have been easy for them
to protect their animals, when invaded, by fencing them into
inclosures.

Can the Indians of these parts have been cannibals? This is 266
a question which always arises when we have dealings with savages
like these.

In America cannibalism has had adherents among "Hebrews
and Samaritans," among "Barbarians and Christians." The savage
Caribs and the cultured Mexicans topped off the very best dishes
of their cuisine with human flesh. The peaceful Peruvians used
not to disdain stews of human blood for their religious feast days,
in which they would knead corn bread with the blood taken from
the foreheads of babes -- what pious butchers were the gentle
and beautiful women devotees of that nation's religion.

In this region of the Chaco, although cannibalism may have
been practiced, temporibus illis, (which cannot be proved), at
the present time it is either non-existent or else must be con-
sidered reduced to its very lowest terms.

727

I shall say nothing about the custom of drinking aloja from 264
the scalp of a prisoner which has been converted into a propitiating
cup of vengeance and victory.

I have seen them drink avidly of the blood of cattle 262
slaughtered for our use, but they do not feed exclusively on cattle 272

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Choroti SK6

C 262

spirits, but not for old men who are initiated in the magic art and know how to render them harmless. — It is curious that on the other hand an animal like the *deer* is regarded by the Choroti as absolutely unfit for food. Not even old men would touch the flesh of deer, believing that if they did, they would die. This is due to the belief, mentioned before, that the deer is an evil spirit (*möhsek*), the reincarnation of the spirit of a sorcerer, a superstition which is widespread among the South American Indians and everywhere manifests itself in an aversion to eating the meat of this innocent animal.

M 785

Ceremonial fasting, as we have seen, is prescribed among the Choroti and the Mataco on certain occasions which are regarded as important and critical in some respect. Thus the father has to restrict his diet when he is lying in couvade, and girls have to diet during their first menstruation. We have also seen that behind these practices there is the fear of evil spirits in one form or another.

If disease and death bringing demons are believed to enter easily into the body with the food eaten, we can understand why eating is so often to the Indians a ceremonial business. This is also intelligible from the point of view that by eating an animal and coming in contact with its soul, a man may acquire the spiritual qualities of that animal. This idea explains the curious custom practised among the Tobas, that when a chief's daughter attains puberty, the men alone have to eat the meat of the ostrich, whereas the women eat the meat of the armadillo. As a general rule, both among the Tobas and among other Chaco Indians, men and women do not eat together but separately, the men first and the women afterwards. This custom is observed so strictly, that one may assume a particular superstition behind it. Moreover, when the Indians eat, they do not speak much with one another and do not like to be spoken to. Since they believe that man may evade evil spirits by keeping silence and avoiding attracting their attention, it is possible that the ceremonial character of their banquets is partly connected with this idea. And as women are especially believed to attract the spirits, this may be, or may originally have been, one reason why the men avoid eating with them. But it should also be remembered that in primitive societes eating together is believed to establish a mysterious union or connection between all those taking part in the common banquet. Since a strict distinction is made between a man's and a woman's spiritual qualities, it is not difficult to understand that the men avoid the company of the women on those occasions when they eat. However

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this may be, it is now impossible to get a positive explanation from the Indians themselves as to their real motives for observing this ancient custom.

The dietary rules observed by the *Tobas* are in many respects more detailed than those of other Chaco tribes. I have mentioned for instance that when a girl reaches the age of puberty she is bound to fast strictly, being particularly forbidden to eat fish and meat. On the other hand, she is enjoined to eat the leaves of the tusca tree and the leaves and fruit of the vine which the Tobas call *charáde*. These leaves and fruit probably possess some magical properties which are believed to have beneficial effects upon the girl. Dobrizhoffer, speaking of the puberty customs of the ancient Abipones, mentions that the girl had to abstain from fish and meat and was only allowed to feed on »a little fruit which grows upon brambles and conduces much towards cooling the blood«. By this fruit he evidently meant the *tasi*-fruit (*charáde*) which is eaten on the same occasion by the Toba girls of the present day.

Among the Tobas and the Mataco, and probably also among the Choroti, a woman is always bound to diet during her menstrual periods, since she is at these periods more or less exposed to supernatural dangers. The Toba woman carefully abstains from eating fish, and her only food is a dish prepared of boiled maize and called *euóhi* in the Toba language. An infringement of these rules would be likely to bring about the terrible consequences which have been mentioned above. Similarly, when a child has been born in a family, both the father and the mother of the child must live on a restricted diet.

Again, after a Toba man has died, his widow, daughter, and other female relatives carefully avoid eating fish. If they infringe this rule, they will, according to the belief of the Tobas, sicken and die or go mad. Instead of fish, maize is eaten. Even some of the men observe the same custom, abstaining from fish for some time after the death of a relative.

All these food restrictions are, no doubt, based upon the same idea, namely, that evil spirits may hide in the forbidden food and gain entrance into the body if it is eaten. At any rate spirits are in some way associated with the food. With regard to the fish this is expressly stated. It is a curious fact that fish, which is the principal food of the Tobas, is so religiously shunned on certain occasions. Behind this superstition there are undoubtedly real experiences as to the harmful effects that the eating of fish may bring. Thus the Tobas assert that incautious

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angry. No one is allowed to call on her and only very young boys may go into her house. She speaks only when it is necessary to get things she needs.

A medicine-woman of the village of Las Lomitas, whose husband died a year before, left her retreat in order to cure a sick child belonging to her family. After every treatment she went back to her hut. The child recovered in five days and she resumed her mourning. At no time did she speak with other members of her family.

In the morning and afternoon a widow plays a drum and weeps. Thus she tries to forget her husband but some time later she will think of him again and then go back to her drum. During this period she cuts her hair three times and eats her food with a fork and spoon.

If a woman looses her husband shortly after marriage, he may call on her frequently but if she marries another man before two years have elapsed the spirit of her late husband kills her new husband. After two years the dead man has forgotten his wife and marries a female spirit. When a widow dies her spirit goes to her husband and they live together as they did on earth. Upon the death of a husband the children are bound to support their mother unless she marries again after the two years of mourning.

XX. Miscellanea

a) *Dreams*

Dreams are of exceptional importance to the Matako who believe that everything which happens in dreams will come to pass in real life. The dream is the life of the soul which after death becomes a spirit. During sleep the soul is released to wander about in the world where it sees what will happen in material life. Ordinary men as well as medicine-men can identify images seen in dreams. Thus the Matako Indians expect to realize in life the accomplishment